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IRELAND IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORY.

BY W. E. H. LECKY, AUTHOR OF A "HISTORY OF ENGLAND IN
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY."

THE kind of interest which belongs to Irish history is curiously different from that which attaches to the history of England and to that of most of the great nations of the Continent. In very few histories do we find so little national unity or continuous progress, or such long spaces which are almost wholly occupied by perplexed, petty internal broils, often stained by atrocious crimes, but turning on no large issue and leading to no clear or stable results. Except during the great missionary period of the sixth and seventh centuries, and during a brief portion of the eighteenth century, we have little of the interest that arises from dramatic situations or shining characters, and in few countries has the highest intellect been, on the whole, so slightly connected with the administration of affairs. To a philosophical student of politics, however, Irish history possesses an interest of the highest order. It is an invaluable study of morbid anatomy. In very few histories can we trace so clearly the effects of political and social circumstances in forming national character; the calamity of missed opportunities and of fluctuating and procrastinating policy; the folly of attempting to govern by the same methods and institutions nations that are wholly different in their characters and their civilization.

The idea which still floats vaguely in many minds that Ireland, before the arrival of the Normans, was a single and independent nation, is wholly false. Ireland was not a nation, but a collection of separate tribes and kingdoms, engaged in almost constant warfare. In this respect, however, she resembled many countries which have since attained the most perfect unity, and there can be little doubt that, if her development had been impeded by no extraneous influences, Ireland would have followed

the same path as England or France. Much stress has been justly laid on the disorganizing influence of a long succession of Danish invasions, though it must be remembered that Ireland owes to the Danes the foundation of some of her most important cities. Roman conquest, which introduced into most of Europe invaluable elements of order, organization, and respect for law, never extended to Ireland. The Anglo-Norman invasion and conquest produced consequences which were almost wholly evil. If the invaders had been driven from the Irish shore, the natural course of development would, no doubt, have been in time continued. If the invaders had completely conquered Ireland, a fusion might have taken place as complete and as healthy as in England. Neither of these two events occurred. The English conquest was prolonged over nearly four hundred years. A hostile and separate power was planted in the centre of Ireland, sufficiently powerful to prevent the formation of another civilization, yet not sufficiently powerful to impose a civilization of its own. Feudalism was introduced, but the keystone of the system, a strong resident sovereign, was wanting, and Ireland was soon torn by the wars of great Anglo-Norman nobles, who were, in fact, independent sovereigns, much like the old Irish kings. The Scotch invasion of the fourteenth century added enormously to the anarchy and confusion; the English power as a living reality contracted to the narrow limits of the pale; in outlying districts the Anglo-Norman assimilated quickly with the Celtic element, while the English legislators in Ireland, alarmed at the tendency, made it the main object of their policy, in the words of Sir John Davies, "to make a perpetual separation and enmity between the English and Irish, pretending no doubt that the English should in the end root out the Irish."

Such a state of things continued till the long and terrible wars of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth broke the power of the independent chiefs and of the Celtic clans, and gave Ireland, for the first time, a political unity. It is one of the great infelicities of Irish history that this result was obtained at the very period of the Reformation. The conquerors adopted one religion, while the conquered retained the other, and thus a new and most enduring barrier was raised between the two nations in Ireland, and a pernicious antagonism was established between law and religion.

Another influence not less powerful than religion had at the

same time come into play. It had become the English policy to place great bodies of English and Scotch settlers on the land that was confiscated in consequence of rebellion, and under the impulse of the strong spirit of adventure which grew up in the generation that followed the Reformation, streams of English and Scotch adventurers poured over. The great settlement of Ulster under James I. proved ultimately a success, and laid the foundation of the prosperity of that province. Other plantations were in time absorbed and assimilated by the Celtic population; but vast revolutions in the ownership of land, accompanied by the subversion of the old tribal customs, laid the foundation of an agrarian war which still continues.

Religious and agrarian causes combined with the civil war in England to produce the great rebellion of 1641 and the eleven years of ghastly, exterminating war which followed. Hardly any page in human history is more appalling. A full third of the population of Ireland perished. Thirty or forty thousand of the most energetic left the country and took service in foreign armies. Great tracts were left absolutely depopulated, and after the rearrangement of land, which was accomplished by the Act of Settlement, the immense preponderance of landed property remained in the hands of the Protestant nation.

New elements, however, of great energy had been planted in Ireland, and the field had been thrown open to their exertions. The excellence of Irish wool and the cheapness of Irish labor laid the foundation of a flourishing woollen manufacture, and with peace, mild administration, and much practical tolerance, the wounds of the country seemed gradually healing. The later Stuart reigns, which form a dark page in English history, were a period of considerable prosperity in Ireland, but that period was soon interrupted by the Revolution. There was no general or passionate rising in Ireland resembling that of 1641, but it was inevitable that the Irish Catholics should have adopted the side of the Catholic King, and it was equally inevitable that when a Catholic Parliament, consisting largely of sons of the men whose properties had recently been confiscated, had assembled at Dublin, its members should have made a desperate effort to reverse their fortunes and replace the land of the country mainly in Catholic hands. The battle of the Boyne shattered the Catholic hopes, and it was followed by a new confiscation, by a new emigration of

the ablest and most energetic Catholics, by a long period of commercial restraints, penal laws, and complete Protestant ascendancy.

The commercial restraints formed part of a protective policy which was at that time general in Europe, and which was severely felt in the American colonies. Though it did not absolutely originate in, it was greatly intensified by, the Revolution, which gave the manufacturing and commercial classes a new power in English government. The linen manufacture was spared, but the total destruction by law of the flourishing woollen manufacture, followed by a number of other restrictions imposed on other branches of industry, deprived Ireland of her most promising sources of wealth, drove great multitudes of energetic Protestants out of the country, and threw the people more and more upon the soil as almost their sole means of support.

The penal laws against the Catholics accompanied or closely followed the commercial restraints. The blame of them may be divided with some equality between the government of England and the Parliament of Ireland. It was the Irish Parliament which enacted these laws, but an English act first made the Irish Parliament exclusively Protestant, and the whole legislation was carried at a time when the Irish Parliament was completely dependent, and incompetent even to discuss any measure without the previous approbation of the English government. In order to judge this legislation with equity, it must be remembered that in the beginning of the eighteenth century restrictive laws against Protestantism in Catholic countries, and against Catholicism in Protestant ones, almost universally prevailed. The laws against Irish Catholics were, on the whole, less stringent than those against Catholics in England. They were largely modelled after the French legislation against the Huguenots, but persecution in Ireland never approached in severity that of Louis XIV., and was absolutely insignificant compared with that which had extirpated Protestantism and Judaism from Spain. The code, however, was not mainly the product of religious feeling, but of policy, and in this respect it has been defended in its broad outlines, though not in all its details, by such Irishmen as Charlemont, Flood, and Parsons. They argue that at the close of a long period of savage civil war it was absolutely necessary for a small minority, who found themselves in possession of the govern-

ment and land of the country, to deprive the conquered and hostile majority of every element of political and military strength. This was the real object of the code. It was a mission of self-defence justified by necessity, and by the fact that it produced in Ireland for the space of about eighty years the most perfect tranquillity.

There is much truth in these considerations, but it is also true that the penal code produced more pernicious moral, social, and political effects than many sanguinary persecutions. In other countries disqualifying or persecuting laws were directed against small fractions of the nation. In Ireland they were directed against the bulk of the community. Being supported by little or no genuine religious fanaticism or proselytizing ardor, they made few Protestants except in the upper orders, where many conformed in order to keep their land or to enter professions; but they drove nearly all the best and most energetic Catholics to the Continent; they discouraged industry; closed the door of knowledge; taught the people to look upon law as something hostile to religion; introduced division and immorality into families by the rewards they offered to apostasy; and condemned the whole country to poverty and impotence by fatally depressing the great majority of its people. Under the influence of the penal laws the Catholics inevitably acquired the vices of serfs, and the Protestants the vices of monopolists. A great portion of the code was pronounced, with good reason, to be flagrantly opposed to the articles of the treaty of Limerick, and it completed the work of the confiscations by making the landlord class in Ireland almost wholly Protestant, while the great majority of the tenantry were Catholics.

There was a moment, however, in the beginning of the century when the whole current of Irish history might easily have changed. Scotland had suffered, like Ireland, from the protective policy that followed the Revolution, and her independent Parliament had retaliated by measures which threatened the speedy separation of the two crowns, and soon led to a legislative union. In Ireland such an union was ardently desired by enlightened Irishmen, and there is every reason to believe that it could then have been carried with universal consent. The Catholics were perfectly passive, and would gladly have accepted a change which withdrew them from the direct government of the conquerors in

a recent civil war. The Protestants had as yet no distinctively national feeling, and a legislative union would have emancipated their industry and added enormously to their security. Molyneux, the first great champion of the legislative independence of Ireland, emphatically declared that he and those who thought with him would gladly have accepted the alternative of an union, and both the Irish houses of Parliament voted addresses in favor of such a measure. If it had been carried, Ireland would have been at least saved from the evils that rose from the commercial restrictions and from the extreme jobbing that grew up around the local legislature, and she would, perhaps, have been saved from some parts of the penal code. But the golden opportunity was lost. The English commercial classes dreaded Irish competition in their markets, and the petition of the Irish legislature was disregarded.

Nearly seventy years of quiet followed. The establishment of the Hanoverian dynasty, the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745, the different wars in which England was engaged, left Ireland absolutely undisturbed. The House of Commons then sat for a whole reign and met only every second year. It was completely subservient to the English Privy Council, and it consisted so largely of nomination boroughs that a few great nobles commanded a decisive preponderance, and they practically conducted the government and administered the patronage of Ireland. There were great jobbing and corruption, but taxation, on the whole, was exceedingly light, and there was no tendency to throw it unduly on the poor, or to create in Ireland any of those many feudal burdens that prevailed in France and Germany. The practical evil most felt was the system of tithes for the support of the Protestant establishment, and it was aggravated by a very unfair exemption of pasture land, and also by the prevailing system of farming out tithes to a class of men known as tithe proctors. In the country districts all power was concentrated in the hands of the landlords, who, with many faults and under many difficulties, at least succeeded in attaining a large measure of genuine popularity.

There was an Irish army of twelve thousand men, but the greater part of it was always sent abroad in time of war, and Ireland was then often left with not more than five thousand soldiers. No militia and no constabulary force existed, but when Whiteboy or other disturbances arose, the landlords put them-

selves at the head of their tenantry, and usually succeeded in suppressing them. Law was very little observed ; industrial virtues were at the lowest ebb ; there was abundance of drunkenness, idleness, turbulence, neglect of duty, extreme ignorance, and extreme poverty ; but there was not much real oppression or religious bigotry, and there were no signs of political disturbance or conspiracy. After a few years the portions of the penal code which restricted the Catholic worship became a dead-letter, and Catholic chapels were everywhere rising on the Protestant estates. The monopoly, however, of place and power continued, though the legal profession was full of professing converts. The theological temperature in both sects had greatly subsided. Land was usually let by the owner on long leases, and at very low rents to tenants who almost invariably divided and sublet their tenancies.

At a later period of the century, when population pressed closely on subsistence, the system of middlemen produced a fierce competition which raised rent in the lower grades to an enormous height, but this evil was less felt with a scanty population, and the hierarchy of tenants at least saved the landlords from the dangerous isolation which their circumstances tended to produce. Arthur Young, who examined the condition of the country very carefully between 1776 and 1778, perceived great signs of growing prosperity, especially in the towns, and, although agriculture was far behind that of England, he found a considerable number of active, intelligent, and improving landlords. In the opinion of Young the rental of Ireland was unduly and unnaturally low, but he urged the landlords to exercise a more direct and controlling influence over their estates, and he recommended them, for this purpose, to give leases for shorter periods and gradually to abolish the system of middlemen and subletting.

In the north there was a powerful, intelligent Protestant community, with a strong leaning to republicanism. They were chiefly Presbyterians, and they resented bitterly the commercial restrictions and the obligation of paying tithes to an Episcopal church. The Irish Parliament was so constituted that they had no political power at all equivalent to their importance, and, like the Presbyterians in England, they were burdened by the Test Act, and their marriages were only valid if celebrated in the Established Church. The great power of the bishops, both in

the Privy Council and in the House of Lords, formed a very serious obstacle to church reform. In all classes of Protestants, however, in the closing years of George II., there was a strong resentment at the political subjection of Ireland, and a determination to obtain, if possible, those constitutional rights which the Revolution of 1688 had secured for England.

It is impossible, within the narrow limits assigned to me, to give even a sketch of the successive stages by which the independence of the Irish Parliament was established. The movement began with the Octennial Act, limiting the duration of Parliament, and it came to full maturity during the war of the American Revolution. Among the Irish Catholics there appears to have been absolutely no sympathy with the American cause, but Ulster Protestantism was enthusiastically on the side of America. Presbyterians from Ulster bore a considerable part in the American armies, and under the influence of American example public opinion in Ireland rapidly advanced. The great volunteer movement of 1778 and the following years was originated by the fact that the government could supply no troops for the defence of Ulster at a time when it was in imminent danger of attack from France. The Protestant gentry called their people to arms; and a great Protestant force was created, which not only secured the country against foreign danger and maintained the most perfect internal order, but also exercised a decisive influence over Irish politics. Volunteer conventions were assembled which represented both property and educated Protestant opinion much more truly than the borough Parliament, and which loudly demanded free trade and Parliamentary independence. Grattan made himself the mouthpiece of the popular feeling; and the English government and Parliament yielded to the demand. The whole system of commercial restraints, which prevented Ireland from developing her resources and trading with foreign countries and the British colonies, was abolished, leaving the commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland to be regulated by special acts. The power of the Privy Council over Irish legislation was abolished. The appellate jurisdiction of the Irish House of Lords was restored, and, above all, the sole competence of the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland to legislate for Ireland was recognized. The Irish Parliament nearly at the same time made

great steps towards uniting the people by relieving the Presbyterians from the Test Act and from the restrictions on their marriages, and the Catholics from those parts of the penal code which chiefly restrained their worship, their education, and their industry. At the same time the Protestant monopoly of political power and of the higher offices remained.

Ireland thus found herself in possession of a Parliament which was, in name at least, perfectly independent. It was a purely Protestant Parliament, elected by Protestants, consisting mainly of landlords and great Protestant lawyers, and representing pre-eminently the property of the country. It was intensely and exclusively loyal, and always ready to adopt far more stringent coercive measures against anarchy and sedition than have ever been adopted by an imperial parliament. It included many men of great talents and great liberality, and through the county constituencies and the representatives of the chief towns educated public opinion was seriously felt within its walls ; but the large majority of its members sat for nomination boroughs within the control of the government, and places and pensions were inordinately multiplied for the purpose of securing a majority.

Could this constitution last ? In framing the course of foreign and imperial policy, in all questions of peace or war, of negotiations or alliances, the Irish Parliament had no voice. Yet it might in time of war, by withholding its concurrence, withdraw the whole weight of Ireland from the forces and fatally dislocate the policy of the empire. It might pursue a commercial policy absolutely inconsistent with imperial interests, and bring Ireland into intimate commercial connection with the enemies of England ; and if English party spirit extended to Ireland and ran in opposite directions in the two legislatures, a collision was inevitable. The Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary, who administered the government of Ireland, were appointed by a British ministry representing the dominant British party ; the counsels of the Irish government were framed in a British cabinet ; the royal consent was given to every Irish bill under the great seal of Great Britain and upon the advice of a British minister. If a machine so constituted could work as long as it was in the hands of a small and undoubtedly loyal and largely-influenced class, could it work if Parliamentary reform made the Irish Parliament subject to the fierce and fluctuating tides of popular opinion ?

above all, if Catholic enfranchisement brought a vast, ignorant, and possibly seditious element into political life ?

It was the recorded opinion of each successive Lord Lieutenant who administered the Irish government after 1782 that it could not, and that it must sooner or later end either in an union or a separation. They said this, though they fully acknowledged the perfect loyalty hitherto shown by the Irish Parliament ; the liberality with which it voted its supplies ; the care with which it subordinated its particular measures to the general interests of the empire. The failure—not solely or even mainly through Irish fault—of an attempt to establish a fixed commercial arrangement between England and Ireland, and a difference between the British and Irish parliaments on the imperial question of a regency, strengthened the opinion of the English government, and for many years before the Union was enacted it was in contemplation. On the two great and pressing questions at issue this policy exercised a powerful influence. The government obstinately resisted every serious attempt to reform the Parliament, lest they should lose that controlling power which they believed to be essential to the permanence of the connection. On the Catholic question their views were more fluctuating, but their dominant impression was that emancipation could only be safely conceded in an imperial parliament, and that it ought to be reserved as a boon which might one day make a legislative union acceptable to the Irish people.

In Ireland, or at least in Protestant Ireland, the idea of an union was now intensely unpopular, but the reformers in the Irish Parliament were seriously divided. Flood and Charlemont desired Parliamentary reform on a purely Protestant basis. They believed that this would include in political life the bulk of the property, loyalty, intelligence, and energy of the country, and that the Irish Catholics could not for a long period, be safely admitted to political power. Grattan, on the other hand, believed that it was the first interest of Ireland to efface the political distinction between the two creeds and nations, and that an introduction of a certain proportion of Catholic gentry into the Irish Parliament would be in the highest degree beneficial. He, at the same time, always taught that Ireland was utterly unfit for democracy, and that under her peculiar conditions no policy could be more disastrous than one which would “destroy the

influence of landed property"; "set population adrift from the influence of property"; subvert or weaken the guiding influence of the loyal and educated. When the United Irishmen proposed a reform bill which would have made the Irish Parliament a purely democratic body, Grattan denounced it with the greatest vehemence. "This plan of personal representation," he said, "from a revolution of power, would speedily lead to a revolution of property, and become a plan of plunder as well as a scene of confusion. . . . Of such a representation the first ordinance would be robbery, accompanied with the circumstance incidental to robbery, murder." He believed, however, that with a substantial property qualification independent constituencies might be formed which would safely represent the best elements of both creeds.

The denial of Parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation, and the refusal of the Irish Parliament to deal with the still more pressing question of tithes, produced much disaffection; but still the country was steadily improving, and no serious danger was felt till the French Revolution burst upon Europe. In every country it stimulated the smouldering elements of disorder. In few countries was its influence more fatal than in Ireland. I have very lately described at length the terrible years of growing conspiracy, anarchy, and crime; of fluctuating policy, and savage repression, and revived religious animosity, and maddening panic, deliberately and malignantly fomented, that preceded and prepared the rebellion. It is sufficient here to say that in the beginning of 1798 three provinces were organized to assist a French invasion. But at the last moment the leaders were betrayed and arrested; the French did not arrive; the rebellion was almost confined to a few Leinster counties, and it broke out without leaders and without a plan. In most places the rebels proved to be wretched bands of marauders intent only on plunder, and, although they committed many murders, they were utterly incapable of meeting the loyalists in the field. But in Wexford priests put themselves at the head of the movement and turned it into a religious war, deriving its main force from religious fanaticism, and waged with desperate courage and ferocity. The massacre of Protestants on Vinegar Hill, in Scullabogue Barn, and on Wexford Bridge, and the general character the rebellion in Leinster assumed, at once and forever checked all that

tendency to rebellion which had so long existed among the Protestants of Ulster. Some 20,000 persons perished before the flame was extinguished. The repression was as savage as the rebellion, and it left Ireland torn by fiercer religious animosities than at any period since the Restoration.

It will dispel many illusions if the reader will remember that the great Irish rebellion was directed mainly against the Irish Parliament, and that it received its death-blow from Irish loyalists acting under that Parliament before any assistance arrived from England. The conspiracy began among Protestants and Deists, who aimed at an union of sects for the purpose of obtaining a democratic republic. It turned into a war which was scarcely less essentially religious than the wars of the Cevennes or of the Anabaptists. Yet two great Catholic provinces remained quiet during the struggle, and a great proportion of the loyalist force which crushed the rebellion consisted of Catholic militia.

The English government thought that the time had now come for carrying a legislative union, and, in the eyes of Lord Cornwallis at least, one of its chief recommendations was that it would take the government of Ireland out of the hands of the triumphant party, and would make Catholic emancipation a possibility. The Catholic bishops were sounded and found to be very favorable. They declared their full willingness to accept an endowment for the priesthood and to give the English government a right of veto on episcopal appointments, and they warmly, efficiently, and unanimously supported the Union. The great majority of the Catholic landed gentry and probably of the lower priests were on the same side; but in general the Catholic laity seem to have shown little interest and to have taken little part in the contest. In Dublin, Catholics as well as Protestants were generally hostile, but Catholic Cork was decidedly favorable, and an assurance that the government desired to carry emancipation in an imperial parliament proved sufficient to prevent any serious Catholic opposition. The United Irishmen seem to have witnessed rather with pleasure than the reverse the dethronement of the body which had defeated them, and the Presbyterians showed scarcely any interest in the question.

Yet outside the ranks of the Catholic clergy the measure found few active supporters, while the Protestants of the Established Church were in general ardently and passionately hostile.

The great majority of the county members and the great preponderance of petitions were against the Union, and the opposition to it, which was led by Foster, Grattan, Parsons, and Plunket, comprised nearly all the independent and unbribed talent in Parliament. The very eminent ability of that small group of Protestant gentlemen never flashed more brightly than in the closing scenes, and there was a moment when the attitude of the Orangemen and the yeomanry was so menacing that the government were seriously alarmed. But a lavish distribution of peerages and places purchased a majority, and the troops stationed in Ireland were too numerous for armed opposition to be possible. In truth, however, no opposition beyond the dimensions of a riot was to be feared. Outside Dublin, Catholic, Presbyterian, and seditious Ireland remained almost indifferent. Even before the measure had passed, opposition speakers complained bitterly that they were deserted by popular support; and it is a memorable fact that in the general election that followed the Union not a single Irish member of Parliament was defeated because he had voted for it.

Pitt intended the Union to be immediately followed by measures admitting the Catholics into the Imperial Parliament, paying the priests, and commuting the tithes. If these three measures, or even if the last two (which were, in truth, the most important), had been promptly carried, the Union might have become popular. The Catholic question had, of late, been greatly mismanaged. The chief men who directed the government in Ireland were bitterly opposed to any concession of political power to the Catholics, but the views of the English ministers had been materially changed. They desired above all things to separate the Catholics from the United Irishmen, and in 1793 they forced upon their reluctant advisers in Ireland an act which extended the suffrage to the vast ignorant Catholic masses, though it left the Catholic gentry still excluded from Parliament. Two years later Lord Fitzwilliam was sent over with instructions to postpone the question if possible, but with authority, as he believed, to carry emancipation if it could not be postponed, and he found the Irish Parliament perfectly prepared to pass it. But the opposition of the King and a question of patronage produced a fatal division and led to the recall of the Viceroy. The passions aroused by the rebellion greatly increased the difficulties of admitting

Catholics to a separate Parliament, but there is clear evidence that at the time of the Union the Irish Protestants were in favor of their admission into the imperial one. The dispositions of the King were well known, but it was believed that, if the scheme of Pitt was submitted to him as the matured policy of an united cabinet, he must have yielded. It is well known how the plan was prematurely revealed ; how Pitt resigned office when the King refused his consent ; how the agitation of the question threw the King into an access of insanity ; and how Pitt then promised that he would not again raise it during the reign. Pitt's conduct on this occasion is, and probably always will be, differently judged. There can be but one opinion of its calamitous effect upon Irish history.

Ninety years have passed since the Union, and the conditions of Ireland have completely changed. The whole system of religious disqualification and commercial disability has long since passed away. Every path has been thrown open, and English professions, as well as the great colonial and Indian services, are crowded with Irishmen. The Established Church no longer exists. Representation has been placed on a broadly democratic basis, giving Ireland, however, an absurdly disproportioned weight in the representation of the kingdom, and its poorest and most backward districts an absurdly disproportioned weight in the representation of Ireland. Finally, an attempt has been made to put down agrarian agitation by legislation to which there is no real parallel in English history, and some parts of which would have been impossible under the Constitution of the United States. Landlords who possessed by the clearest title known to English law the most absolute ownership of their estates have been converted into mere rent-chargers. Tenants who entered upon their tenancies under formal written contracts for limited periods have been rooted forever on the soil. Rents have been reduced by judicial sentence, with complete disregard both to previous contracts and to market value, and the legal owner has had no option of refusing the change and reëntering on the occupation of his land. A scheme of purchase, too, based upon imperial credit, has been established and will probably soon be largely extended, which is so extravagantly and almost grotesquely favorable to the tenant that it enables him by paying for the space of forty-nine years, instead of his reduced judicial rent, an annual sum

which is considerably smaller, to purchase the freehold of his farm. It is a simple and incontestable truth that neither in the United States, nor in England, nor in any portion of the continent of Europe, is the agricultural tenant so favored by law as in Ireland, or anything of the nature of landlord oppression made so impossible. But though agitation has diminished, it has not ceased, and the great body of the poorer Catholics still follow the banner of home rule.

About a third of the population of Ireland, on the other hand, regard home rule as the greatest catastrophe that could befall themselves, their country, or the empire ; and it is worthy of notice that they include almost all the descendants of Grattan's Parliament, and of the volunteers, and of those classes who in the eighteenth century sustained the spirit of nationality in Ireland. Belfast and the surrounding counties, which alone in Ireland have attained the full height and vigor of English industrial civilization ; almost all the Protestants, both Episcopalian and Non-conformist ; almost all the Catholic gentry ; the decided preponderance of Catholics in the lay professions, and a great and guiding section of the Catholic middle class are on the same side. Their conviction does not rest upon any abstract doctrine about the evil of federal governments or of local parliaments. It rests upon their firm persuasion that in the existing conditions of Ireland no parliament could be established there which could be trusted to fulfil the most elementary conditions of honest government—to maintain law ; to protect property ; to observe or enforce contracts ; to secure the rights and liberties of individuals and minorities ; to act loyally in times of difficulty and danger in the interests of the empire.

They know that the existing home-rule movement has grown up under the guidance and by the support of men who are implacable enemies to the British Empire ; that it has been for years the steady object of its leaders to inspire the Irish masses with feelings of hatred to that empire, contempt for contracts, defiance of law and of those who administer it ; that, having signally failed in rousing the agricultural population in a national struggle, those leaders resolved to turn the movement into an organized attack upon landed property ; that in the prosecution of this enterprise they have been guilty, not only of measures which are grossly and palpably dishonest, but also of an amount

of intimidation, of cruelty, of systematic disregard for individual freedom scarcely paralleled in any country during the present century ; and finally that, through subscriptions which are not drawn from Ireland, political agitation in Ireland has become a large and highly lucrative trade—a trade which, like most others, will no doubt continue as long as it pays.

The nature, methods, and objects of the organization which would probably exercise a dominant influence over an Irish parliament have been established by overwhelming evidence and beyond all reasonable doubt, after a long, careful, and most impartial judicial investigation. I do not know whether the report of the late special commissioners and the evidence on which it is founded have been reprinted in America, or whether many Americans have studied the admirable work in which Professor Dicey—perhaps the ablest of living writers on political subjects—has very recently summed up their conclusions. American readers may find in these works abundant evidence of the true character of the Irish home-rule movement. If they read them with impartiality, they will, I believe, have little difficulty in concluding that there have been few political movements in the nineteenth century which are less deserving of the respect or support of honest men.

W. E. H. LECKY.